Ned Ludd & Queen Mab

Peter Linebaugh

Machine-Breaking, Romanticism, and the Several Commons of 1811–12

I stopped." Eventually he found a teacher whose brother had just returned from the Iberian Peninsula with a Portuguese wife. They will eat potatoes.

In the Peninsula, however, the British Army ate bread. The Army bought grain from Malta where Egyptian wheat was unloaded. This was a major change in the international grain trade. Muhammad Ali routed the mameluk leadership at a feast in Cairo in March 1811, the first step in centralizing power in Egypt. The second step was the reorientation of the grain exports away from Ottoman markets via sea trade protected by the British Navy to meet needs of the British Army.[10] However other characteristics of "primitive accumulation" had commenced, the expropriation of charity and religiously endowed lands, centralization of taxes and tributes, and the privatization of lands, intensification of irrigation corvées, or forced labor on canals. In Upper Egypt lands were "held communally and assigned to individual cultivators annually" but in the fertile delta of lower Egypt boundaries were easily established.[11]

So, here's a change in Egypt: grain for a new, large market, which causes reduction in subsistence farming and removal of several forms of commoning. While these changes might help feed armies in the Iberian Peninsula, they could not feed the hungry bellies of England during this winter of shortages. George Mellor, the Yorkshire Luddite who was to hang in 1813, was a veteran of the British campaign in Egypt.

Scarcity was answered by the renewal of the moral economy in England and the persistence of "agrarian outrages" in Ireland against tithes, taxes, cesses, and high prices of land. Land for cattle grazing left the people hungry for land for food, which was available only by the system of conacre—a half acre, or potato patch, leased from sowing to harvest, rent paid by labor. These were the conditions for a flourishing legal subculture, or "the clear notion of a code of laws quite separate from that represented by government." The Rockites defended this legal subculture against law administered by Castle and court.

10. Muhammad Ali's state-sponsored long staple cotton industry did not begin until 1821. Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 145, and Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), 32.
11. Alan Richards, *Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800–1980: Technical and Social Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 12.

Here are a few examples of Irish anonymous letters from the Luddite years of 1811 and 1812. To a curate of Ardcolm, near Wexford, a letter writer advised him "to study Divinity and not oppression especially as you being well paid for it." A second warned, "Any person who will persevere in oppression let them expect nothing but emediate [sic] execution." A third warned against a ship owner from sailing away from co. Down with a load of potatoes who might receive a visit from Captain Slasher or Captain Firebrand, on behalf of "poor indigint peasants who lies fettered under the yoke of tyranny." Captain Knockabout might visit to cause the rents to fall.[12]

While studying the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* and admiring Defoe's *History of the Devil*, William Carleton came upon a wedding dance upon the greensward and under the influence of poteen and a red-haired fellow who was "seldom absent in fair or market from a fight," a Catholic prayer-book was pressed into his hand, and he was given the words and signs of a Ribbonman swearing allegiance to an independent Ireland, to mutuality in defense against Orangemen, and to noncooperation with the courts.[13] This was part of the Irish Catholic "underground" with links to an older, commoning economy of land and labor.

IV.

In pulling an Irish thread, we incidentally came across several types of commons, including the knowledge commons supported by Irish hospitality and the very old agrarian commons of the Upper Nile as well as the Nile delta. Notions of community and of commons were central to the Luddites.

> We will never lay down Arms [till] The House of Commons passes an Act to put down all Machinery hurtful to Commonality, and repeal that to hang Frame Breakers. But We. We petition no more—that won't do—fighting must.
>
> Signed by the General of the Army of Redressers
> Ned Ludd Clerk
> Redressers for ever. Amen

12. Stephen Randolph Gibbons, *Captain Rock, Night Errant: The Threatening Letters of Pre-Famine Ireland, 1801–1845* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 59, 60.
13. *The Autobiography of William Carleton* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1968).

"Sneering at the Luddites is still the order of the day. Peter Linebaugh's great act of historical imagination stops the scoffers in their tracks. It takes the cliche of 'globalization' and makes it live: the Yorkshire machine-breakers are pat right back in the violent world economy of 1811-12, in touch with the Atlantic slave trade, Mediterranean agribusiness, the Tecumseh rebellion, the brutal racism of London aristocrats. The local and the global are once again shown to be inseparable—as they are, at present, for the machine-breakers of the new world crisis."
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West of Eden

Communes and Utopia in Northern California

EDITED BY IAIN BOAL, JANFERIE STONE, MICHAEL WATTS, AND CAL WINSLOW

government put a lot of money into early childhood programs and that was a huge bonus for them. They started making money hand over fist. They didn't have to pay salaries. One, Flori's husband, had had a successful steel business in Philadelphia and was a really astute businessman. He took over the educational play business and rapidly developed it into a multimillion-dollar affair. Flori was willing to help if you had any problems. She became the go-between for me and my wife. I was able to reconnect with my little girl, Xabi [Xabiri]. I convinced Sybil to visit. She spoke to the Elder and was very moved by the whole experience. Within six months she was back because the community challenged her. Not as my wife. First you become a novice, then you go into the preparation group for a 'baptism' into the community. Which was my second epiphany. Up on Mount Tam I had had the big 'yes, yes, yes.' Here I had the big 'no, no, no'—the neti, neti, not this, confess all your sins, grovel, die to your ego. Very painful, but very enlightening. I think the Elder didn't trust my experience, considering it too emotional. I cried for three days straight. As a novitiate in the Bruderhof you commit yourself totally, including all your real property now and all your future assets. The year was adventurous. The Elder decided that one woman was haunted by demons. We had an ongoing exorcism. What a trip. The community was bringing Sybil and myself closer together. I was having breakfasts (taken privately with family) with her and Xabi. It was such a thrill to have my little girl. In a way my scheme had worked."

A year later they were asked to prepare again for baptism. Sybil, working as the office manager, had caught fire while Ramón hung back.

"One day we were driving with the Elder. Sybil, sitting in front with the Elder, turns, challenging me. 'You're not talking up in meetings. What's wrong? I think you love me more than you love Jesus.' That fairly put a spear through me. I suddenly lost trust in the whole situation. I saw it in a dark light; Sybil was attracted to the Elder—oh, here we go again. I thought we'd be where Sybil wouldn't play out her sexual attractions and here she is with the Elder, of all people, the man I'd idolized. I went into a complete state of anxiety. I'd been celibate. My first months there I was masturbating in the shower but realized it was not kosher and purposefully held that urge down. The minute I lost trust, an overwhelming sexual thing took over. I started masturbating, then confessed it to

one of the Elder's acolytes. Gradually they pushed me out, saying 'You'd better not come to the worship for a while.' I'd continue doing it. 'Maybe you should move to another Bruderhof.' My mind couldn't say, 'I want out of here.' My body took over and said, 'I'm gonna move you out. This place isn't healthy.' I went to work at a local camp for the summer. Things didn't get better. Questioned by the group, I said, 'The way I feel, I'm in a cage and there's one door you want me to walk through and I'm not going through that door.' They all departed very sorrowfully. I drove out to California in 1959, like the wrath of god was chasing me across country. It took a while to get over all this. I met someone and instigated divorce proceedings. Sybil and the Elder showed up. They didn't believe in divorce and they were going to try and talk me out of it. Really spooky."

Tape Music Pioneer

"I studied at the San Francisco Conservatory and in my last year I started a concert series and met my partner, Mort Subotnick. 1962 was our first year in an old Victorian, slated to be demolished, on Russian Hill. We put an ad in the *Chronicle* saying we were looking for an electronics engineer; this guy showed up and built us a synthesizer, taking about eight months. He beat Moog by a year. We realized that the visual aspect of a concert is important. Of course, it's possible to do it in total darkness—we had a composer friend who started Audium, which has been playing electronic music in total darkness for forty years.[2] But Mort and I wanted light and tried two already known lightshow people, each with their own agendas. I knew Tony Martin and said, 'Please come do our lightshow stuff,' and finally talked him into it. It was never his first love but he did a very, very good job. We collaborated with local artists, poets. We had Ronnie Davis do an experimental show. It cost us a fellowship from Ampex, the Redwood City tape recording company, when an Ampex guy came and the show was so scatological that he walked out. Mort ran out after him crying, 'This is not what we usually do!'

Ron Davis found a place on Divisadero, He said 'How about we share this place?' We liked it and thought about sharing with the Mime Troupe, but knew we'd be swamped. So we rented it without Ron and invited Anna Halprin and her dance workshop to rent space for $75, and

2 Audium, Theatre of Sound-Sculptured Space, http://www.audium.org.

"There are a lot of versions of the 1960s, and this is one that isn't stale or familiar, a book by a lot of good writers and original thinkers about how some much older ideas about the commons and the community were tinkered with, enlarged upon, turned into experiments that sometimes succeeded, sometimes failed, but left legacies that mattered. It's also a book about California's tendency to go experimental, idealistic, and eclectic."
REBECCA SOLNIT, author of *Storming the Gates of Paradise*

The pulse of radical energies code-named "the sixties" inspired thousands to reject their assigned roles in the American century, taking their refusal into the streets or back to the land, and seeking to build another world. Either way, in city or country, the projects were communal. Focusing on the San Francisco Bay Area and hinterlands, with a deep history and rich legacy of cooperative schemes, *West of Eden* uses interviews and historical research to present vivid portraits of the rural communes of Mendocino and Sonoma, the Black Panther households in Oakland, the Diggers of Haight-Ashbury, the Native American occupation of Alcatraz, and the hippies' love affair with the Bucky dome. *West of Eden* is a utopian potlatch offered to the coming generation who will find here, in the rubble of the twentieth century, a past they can use—indeed one they will need—in the passage from the privations of commodity capitalism to an ample life in common.

"Utopias—we can't live without them, nor within them, for long. In *West of Eden* we see California, an earthly utopia, and the 1960s, a utopian moment, in full flower. Brave souls creating a heavenly host of communal spaces on the edge of America, hoping to break free of a world of capital, sexism, oligarchy, race. An amazing place and time that, for all its failures, changed the world—and which finally gets its due in this marvelous collection."
RICHARD WALKER, UC Berkeley, author of *The Country in The City*

"The counterculture—from the North Beach Parnassus to the underground press—and 'the Movement'—from Marxists to anarchists—all of it depended on a magnificent base, and here it is described, magnificently: the Oakland breakfast program, the Alcatraz occupation, the Mime troupe, and pot farms, the communes, the collectives, the co-ops of California during the 1960s. On the lam? A bad trip? Burnt out? AWOL? Dropping out? Requiring metamorphosis? These could provide rural and urban alternatives to Cold War, patriarchy, speed-up, or death in the jungle. With roots in previous decades of struggle by trade unions, ethnic enclaves, religious breakaways, and nineteenth-century dreams, and with branches in the lore of our own contemporary foodways, child-rearing practices, decision-making and meeting protocols, sexual politics, and DIY culture, the California communards cleared the path. Both veterans and young folk, grey-hairs and newbies, will find beautiful memoire, authentic experience, and brilliant analysis in the pages of *West of Eden*."
PETER LINEBAUGH, author of *The Magna Carta Manifesto*

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